



# European Union

## BACKGROUND GUIDE 2

Assessing the Relationship Between Russia  
and the European Union

## Director's Letter

Welcome to the European Union at OakridgeMUN II! My name is Ivan Maykov, a Junior from Juanita High School, and I am honored to be serving as your Director. Joining me are the wonderful chair Taoyi from Semiahmoo Secondary, and the amazing assistant director Richard Min from Burnaby North.

The European Union is one of the most established intergovernmental regional organizations around the world, uniting twenty seven nations together with a shared government. With nearly 450 million residents within their border, the European Union generates nearly 20% of the world's entire GDP, united by their common currency, the Euro. Most nations within the bloc have a shared border system - the schengen zone - and all EU citizens have the right to live and work in any other EU nation. These unique circumstances present incredibly unique issues: as nationalism across the world grows deeper, the European Union must chart its path in the future as either a symbol of continental unity or a meritless bureaucracy. Our two topics hit to the core of these divides: European Military Reform and Assessing the Relationship between Russia and the European Union are two key topics the European instrument will be most challenged to solve within the next decade.

As the United States slowly draws back their military across the globe, it leaves a space for terrorism and enemy states to grow. The rise of China and other various authoritarian nations threaten the democracy-induced peace of the last 30 years, leading to Europe reckoning it's position in the world: after centuries of colonisation and warring, Europe has settled into one of the most peaceful continents in the world - with strong military support, mostly by the United States and Canada, Europe has been able to reduce military spending to near-zero amounts, instead investing in building up the continent. As nationalist sentiments grow in the western nations, this bond seems to be at the breaking point - Europe's security may not be guaranteed for so long. As delegates, your task is to forge a new system for the European military - will the individual militaries of each nation all stay separate, weakening any chance at a coordinated response, or will they all merge, possibly violating the sovereignty of the European Nations when they need it the most?

Russia has been the natural enemy of most European states since the Russian Empire was founded, only uniting in cases of extreme dire need, such as the first few months after the end of the Second World War. The EU currently regards Russia as a necessary

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evil, as nearly all natural gas and oil supplied to the 27 member nations come from Russia. As the nation keeps pushing against liberal democracy, the EU has to both push them back due to the stark ideological differences, and pull them in due to the necessities the authoritarian nation provides to the European Union. With this topic, delegates must answer an incredibly tough question - is the EU-Russia relationship worth keeping?

From this backgrounder, you will learn the basics and fundamentals of these issues. This document is by no means the limit of your research - to gain a thorough understanding of both of these topics, using outside sources, both from the various EU governments and its critics, is imperative to fully capturing the depth of both topics. Position papers can be emailed to [eu@oakridgemun.com](mailto:eu@oakridgemun.com) and if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us, as we are here to help you. We wish you the best of luck researching these topics and writing a position paper, and can't wait to see you all in committee!

Thank you,  
Ivan Maykov  
European Union | Director

## Committee Overview

The European Union began as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950 consisting of six member states with Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It was established originally to control and organise free coal and steel movements in Europe as well as to improve the sources of production. Seven years later in 1957, the six member states signed the two Treaties of Rome that created the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and also the European Economic Community (EEC) which enabled a common market and abolished tariffs within European Union countries in the late 1960s.

In 1965, the European Economic Community agreed to sign the Brussels Treaty that would combine the European Atomic Energy Community, the European Economic Community and the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community into one single commission.<sup>1</sup> These three communities would later become the principal institutions of the European Union and be referred to as the European Communities.

The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 (also known as the Treaty of the European Union) formed the current European Union (EU), which, at present time, contains 27 major states across Europe and represents almost 500 million citizens of Europe. This treaty allowed for citizens of every member state to be granted EU citizenship, enabled citizens to vote and run for office in elections of the EU country they lived in, and also began the process of establishing a central banking system and common currency (the euro).<sup>2</sup>

Today, the EU is a powerful voice on the world stage and strives to discuss economic, political, and social issues between its countries with the guidance of its 7 institutions within the union. These include the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Central Bank, and the European Court of Justice. Moreover, the EU built a single market that allows its almost 500 million citizens to travel and move freely within while also allowing its currency, the euro, to be a major world currency.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Brussels-Treaty-European-history-1948>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Maastricht-Treaty>

<sup>3</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/euro\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/euro_en)

## Topic Overview

Heading into the new decade, Europe-Russia relations are in a very strategic position where the possibility of mutual benefits and cooperation are quite high. As two extremely influential figures on the world stage, the EU and Russia face many issues where solutions can be more easily forged when working together. However, relations with Russia have been tense as the EU still has many long-standing disagreements with its Eastern neighbour; from aggressive actions such as the annexation of Crimea to its anti-NATO sentiment and pressures on regions such as the Middle East and the Black Sea.

Historically, these two entities were always in close proximity with each other, and have been known to cooperate. Although this tie was severed during the Cold War, it soon returned around the turn of the century. Being a very large supplier of energy resources and natural gas to the EU, the economic relations between Russia and the EU stand to this day. The current legal basis for connections between these two states are outlined in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which have been mostly upheld throughout the years.

The problem this committee aims to answer is that of developing this relation between Russia and the EU further. People have speculated that Russia is growing stronger, and its ambition may end up complicating relations with the EU. This committee will be discussing the economic and political connections to their eastern neighbours, outlining short term and long term goals on how to best achieve the EU's interests, and considering the direction that this relation will head towards in the future.

## Historical Analysis

As two of the most influential voices on the world stage, the European Union and Russia have come to its agreements and disagreements throughout the years. At the turn of the century in June of 1994, the European Union and Russia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which outlined the legal basis of their relations. Though the treaty was signed in 1994, it came into force in December of 1997 and had a validity period of 10 years. However, since the first expiration date in 2007, the PCA has been automatically renewed until a new agreement is signed. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement outlines the fundamentals of EU-Russia relations from political to economic to even cultural. This agreement further allowed for few restrictions on Russian exports to the European Union with an exception for the steel industry.

At the start of the new century in May of 2003, the European Union and Russia decided to further strengthen their partnership at the St Petersburg Summit. The partnership led to the creation of the European Union/ Russia Common Spaces- Common Economic Space, Common Space of Freedom, Security, and Justice, the Common Space of External Security and the Common Space on Research, Education, and Culture. The Common Spaces were established with the concept of being ‘an extensive basis’ for the strengthening of the European Union- Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in 2008, negotiations had started for a more detailed replacement for the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The replacement would have ideally had ‘legally binding commitments’ in sectors such as political, justice, security, and economic cooperation. In 2010, a ‘Partnership for Modernisation’ was established, however because of Russia’s involvement in Crimea in 2014, all talks were suspended. In addition, Russia’s intervention in Crimea also led to the European Union freezing all cooperation with Russia with the exception of cross-border and people-to-people contacts in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

In the past, economic relations between the two powerhouses have been seen as positive with the European Union and Russia sharing multiple common interests in the sectors of science and technology cooperation. Major projects can include the

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_05\\_103](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_05_103)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>

European-Russian Centre for cooperation in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic environmental and climate research (EURUCAS), and the joint-funded Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP).<sup>6</sup> Russia's membership into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in August of 2012 further solidified their economic alliance.

However on the political scale, many incidents throughout the 21st century have severely thretated EU-Russia relations with most prominent ones being the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute of 2009, the 2008 war in Georgia, and most importantly, the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia. The events in Crimea caused immense sanctions on Russia by mainly the European Union as well as other nations; some which are still in place today.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/295068/reporting>

## Timeline

**June 1994** - The European Union and Russia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which outlined the legal basis of their relations.

**2003** - Russia, along with the foreign ministers of France and Germany strongly opposed the United States led invasion of Iraq.

**May 2003** - The St Petersburg Summit, where the idea of Common Spaces were presented to further solidly EU-Russia relations.

**2008-2010** - Negotiations start for a replacement for the PCA. The PCA would have ideally had 'legally binding commitments' in areas such as political, justice, and economics.

**1 June, 2010** - The European Union and Russia launch their new partnership named the 'Partnership for Modernisation'.

**20 February, 2014** - Russia's annexation of Crimea began which led to heavy EU sanctions against Russia.

**25 January, 2021** - The European Union considers new sanctions on Russian individuals in the wake of the arrest and jailing of opposition leader Alexey Navalny.

**12 February, 2021** - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announces that Russia is ready for a 'break' in relations if the European Union were to impose further sanctions.

## Current Situation

In the past decade, though political tensions between the European Union and Russia have been high, economic relations have prospered. In 2019, the European Union was Russia's biggest trading partner while Russia was the European Union's fifth largest. Values of the goods traded both ways equated to about 232 billion Euros in the same year. Gas and oil sectors are especially crucial as 40% of all European Union gas and 27% of its oil were imported from Russia in 2019. Bilateral trade relations between the two superpowers are extremely important with nearly 322 billion Euros worth of goods being traded in 2012- the highest to date. Furthermore, the European Union is the largest investor in Russia, owning an estimated 276.8 billion Euros worth of stock in 2018, or 75% of all Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stock in the country.

However, the economic success between the European Union and Russia cannot conceal the sanctions placed on each other after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Led by the European Union and the United States, The sanctions against Russia severely damaged their economy and relationship with the European Union. The Russian financial crisis of 2014 soon followed with falling oil prices and the sharp devaluation of the Russian ruble. European Union markets were limited to just five Russian financial institutions, three defence and energy companies, and also also imposed a ban on the trading of arms. The sanctions imposed by the European Union in 2014 due to Russia's involvement in Ukraine are still in place today, harming Russian energy, financial and arms sectors; they are expected to remain in place until July 31st, 2021. Not only has the sanctions hurt the Russian economy, the losses of the European Union due to this have been estimated to be around 100 billion Euros in 2015. Many different sectors in the European Union have reported tremendous pressures due to falling prices and decrease in income.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 allowed for better cooperation between the European Union and Russia. In the dire time of need in March 2020, Italy received medical supplies, military medics, and special disinfection vehicles from the Russian Army. Moreover, Russia's own COVID-19 vaccine, Sputnik-V, was bought by Hungary on January 22, 2021 when the nation signed an agreement for two million doses. Though the Sputnik-V vaccine gained worldwide criticism in the beginning, Russia has now set its sights on selling and distributing the vaccine to the European Union as the bloc is still consistently struggling with its vaccination schedule as well as facing extreme supply shortages.

On February 12th, 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced to the world that Russia is ready to take a break from relations with the European Union if they were to impose more sanctions. Lavrov also told Russia that his country must 'prepare for war' as peaceful relations with the European Union may not come easily. The newer tensions between the European Union and Russia began during the beginning of the year when Russia jailed key opposition leader and critic of Vladimir Putin, Alexei Navalny. The relations worsened when during the second week of February 2021, European Union Foreign Minister Josep Borrell returned from a disastrous trip to Moscow. The aim of his trip was to call for the immediate release of Alexei Navalny while also discussing the future of European Union-Russia relations. Lavrov further stated that when the European Union admitted 10 new nations, including former Soviet countries in 2004, the decline had started for their relations with the European Union.

Though the admission of the baltic states and former Soviet countries have led to a decline in European Union- Russia relations, on the political perspective, relations between the two powerhouses have worsened dramatically in recent years starting from Russia's involvement in Crimea in 2014. Critics would call the event the turning point in European Union- Russia political relations. In the wake of Russia's involvement in Crimea, many European Union leaders have been extremely outspoken and condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine. Additionally, the poisoning of key opposition leader Alexei Navalny in August of 2020, further damaged relations. The European Union imposed new sanctions on key Russian figures such as Alexander Bortnikov, the director of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), and five senior Russian officials. The European Union also believed that Navalny's poisoning was only possible with the approval by the Presidential Executive Office.

## Past UN/International Involvements

### *EU Accession*

The European Union has been open to accession of new member states, with former Soviet nations as well as new ones such as Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Serbia all having applied in the past few decades. In the past however, the addition of new member states, most important former Soviet ones have angered Russia greatly and heavily damaged the European Union-Russia relationship. Although accession has had several points of contention, there is already clear criteria for nations that want to enter the EU. Such prerequisites may include adhering to international Human Rights agreements or fulfilling GDP requirements. The accession projects such as the 2018 Western Balkan strategy have set the backbone for increasing relations with nations that are interested in joining the EU while also expanding the bloc. In the face of Russian aggression, accession has become an increasingly pressing concern and viable solution. Steps have been taken in the past by the European Union to broaden their member list, but now it is looking even more crucial. The European Union is still working towards improving relations with possible accession nations, granting them funding and support in return for cooperation if relations worsen with Russia.

### *United States Involvement:*

The United States' impact on European Union-Russia relations throughout the decades are seen by some as drastic by some and not enough by others. However, it is without doubt that the relations between the European Union and Russia have been complicated greatly with Russia's relation with the United States and also the European Union's relation with the world's leading economic nation. Starting in 2004 when the United States made the decision to invade Iraq, Russia strongly opposed the decision, and decided to align itself with key United States NATO allies such as France and Germany and go against American policy. The involvement of Russia in Crimea also led to the United States following the footsteps of the European Union and imposing further sanctions on Russia. Moreover, the involvement of Russia in the 2016 United States elections prompted European leaders to question if the nation will do the same for European elections as well. The questions were answered as strong evidence pointed out Russian involvement in the Italy referendum in 2016, as well as the Brexit vote in June 2016.

## Potential Solutions

### *Upholding Economic Sanctions*

This solution is one that poses high risk yet high reward. Sanctions have been imposed on Russia in the past decade, most notably during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, drastically decreasing EU investment in the area. The sanctions resulted in the drop of natural gas and resource prices within Russia, decreasing the value of the ruble with a -2.2% output in Russia's GDP. In the modern day, sanctions are likely to continue imposing pressure on the Russian economy, which may thwart off its aggressive tendencies and incentivize them to seek mutual profits with the EU in terms of trade in the long run. However, this solution comes with the cost of backfiring, as the EU depends on Russian resources, most notably natural gas. If such economic sanctions are to be continually implemented, they should be done so in a cautious and justified manner. Unnecessary tension can easily further deteriorate EU-Russia relations and cause further issues in the future. This solution may be looking increasingly likely as in February 2021, European Union Foreign Minister Josep Borrell returned from a dire trip to Moscow, announcing that further sanctions have not been placed, but may be on the horizon. Imposing new sanctions, however, may lead to Russia becoming even more distant from the West and destroying any future peaceful relations with the nation.

### *Revising the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement*

The PCA entered force in 1997, and since then, the relationship between the EU and Russia has deviated greatly. In the younger days of Russia, the nation showed promise to a full integration into the European society, adhering to democratic ideals, and engaging in transparent communication with western nations. Negotiations have even started for a revised PCA, but with Russia's involvement in Crimea in 2014, everything was halted. Currently, Russia is more or less distant, although cooperation with the EU has still been seen. With the renewal of the PCA, the committee must consider the factors of revived Russian expansionism, economic relations, and how the cooperation will work. This solution is seen as more plausible, but also heavily depends on the individual relations between each EU member state and Russia, which oftentimes are polarizing and may be hard to reach a consensus for. This renewal should seek to improve transparency while also keeping Russia in check. However, Russia will not agree to a one-sided agreement favouring the European Union, therefore the bloc must

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work together to draft a resolution that both satisfies Russian demands while also keeping their own best interests at hand.

### *Expanding the EU*

The accession of new nations into the EU has long been discussed as a strategy to counter Russian aggression. As a state heavily looking for outwards expansion and alliances, the EU has seen Russia grow increasingly active in places such as Ukraine, Georgia, and the Black Sea. If such key areas are controlled by the EU or even NATO, the threat that Russia poses would be drastically minimized and a long term friendlier method could be used. Examples of this solution would be accepting nations such as Turkey into the EU. As both a major trading partner and a strategically placed nation, Turkey would easily prove to be an asset. However, different member states have differing views when they come to accession, as nations such as Turkey are not known to be particularly democratic given their current president and hegemony in the Middle East. If such an expansion were to take place, the EU would need to set terms, weigh the benefits, and aim for a full integration. This is not an easy nor a short term solution, and would require coordination and time to pull off.

## **Bloc Positions**

### *Eastern Europe and Post Soviet States*

Nations in this bloc are generally in close geographical proximity with Russia. Many have already been victims of Russian cyberattacks and state actions, and due to the attacks, many of the smaller nations may be afraid of risking any further tensions with Russia. When the post Soviet States entered the European Union starting from 2004, it had been the catalyst of a steady decline regarding relations between Russia and the European Union. These member states generally lack resources to combat Russia in the course of any aggressive movement, so they heavily depend on their western counterparts for defense. Many of the nations, such as Belarus, also have close military relations with Russia and often conduct joint military-scientific activities. Members of this bloc do not want to risk aggravating Russia, and are likely to advocate for friendlier and slower methods to resolve the tension, including improving trade connections with Russia and receiving aid from more powerful EU nations. However, delegates must remember that other nations in the area such as Ukraine currently have extremely high tensions with Russia stemming from different political and economic differences. Examples of countries in this bloc may include the 3 Baltic States, Poland, Romania, and Hungary.

### *Western Europe*

This bloc mainly comprises of the most powerful and prominent states in the European Union such as France and Germany. Although not supportive of increasing tensions with Russia, these nations have made it clear that Russia's actions can not be tolerated. However, keep in mind that Western European nations heavily rely on the energy trade with Russia. In the past, Germany and Russia are collaborating together to build the Nord Stream gas pipeline, a system of off-shore pipelines that runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. Furthermore, Russia also regards Germany as its most important trading partner in Europe. The relationship is not seen as one sided, as Germany sees Russia as a crucial nation for trade and economic relations. As integral parts of NATO, they are likely to look at cooperating with nations such as the United States to strengthen infrastructure and improve their individual defense systems. Members in this bloc will also generally call for measures to revitalize European-Russian relationships by updating the PCA and seek for a more mutually beneficial stance. However, nations in this bloc are also the leading voices of calling

for the imposition of heavier sanctions on Russia due to political differences. Including some of the more influential nations in the European Union, this bloc may include France, Germany, and Spain.

## Guiding Questions

1. Where do relations stand between your nation and Russia currently?
2. Looking forward, are your relations with Russian going to improve or worsen? Explain.
3. Currently, does your nation have sanctions against Russia?
4. Is Russia an important trading partner for your nation?
5. Historically, has Russia been an ally to your nation?
6. Does your nation support the expansion of the EU?

## Extra Resources

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>

<https://www.vocaleurope.eu/eu-russia-relations-towards-increasingly-geopolitical-paradigm/>

<https://russiaeu.ru/en/brief-overview-relations>

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1500/RR1579/RAND\\_RR1579.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1579/RAND_RR1579.pdf)

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304728953\\_EU\\_Relations\\_with\\_Russia\\_Partnership\\_or\\_Asymmetric\\_Interdependency](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304728953_EU_Relations_with_Russia_Partnership_or_Asymmetric_Interdependency)

[https://eucenter.as.miami.edu/\\_assets/pdf/kanetrussiaeugaslongedi2\\_kanet\\_version.pdf](https://eucenter.as.miami.edu/_assets/pdf/kanetrussiaeugaslongedi2_kanet_version.pdf)

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